

**PUBLIC SCOPING LETTER
CANNON BEACH DAY-USE AREA IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT**

Project Area Location and Description (where)

Cannon Beach Day-Use Area is adjacent to the Gulf of Alaska; about 3.5 air miles from Yakutat, Alaska (see attached vicinity map and conceptual design). There are approximately 7 miles of sandy beach accessed from Forest Development Road (FDR) 9963, which ends at the Cannon Beach Day-Use Area.

The Cannon Beach Day-Use Area is about 2 acres in size and consists of a log shelter, log pavilion, parking for about 25 vehicles, a single-hole vault toilet, a buffalo amphibious military vehicle, and the two namesake WWII era cannons. A gravel access path connects the parking/shelter/pavilion area with the restroom and the closest cannon. The furthest cannon is accessed from either FDR 9968, from along the beach bluff, or from a primitive natural surface trail from the other cannon site. FDR 9963, shelter, and pavilion border a large open undeveloped area – approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ acre. Natural groundcover in the clearing is low and reminiscent of meadow or beach vegetation. The area receives daily use year round.

This project occurs outside of an inventoried roadless area, and entirely within the Semi-Remote Recreation land use designation which provides for recreation and tourism in natural-appearing settings. According to the Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines for Recreation and Tourism found in the Forest Plan, the Forest Service will *identify opportunities to enhance existing, and provide additional, recreation activities, opportunities, and services where desirable to meet local or Forest-wide recreation demands* (page 4-44, IIB).

Purpose and Need for Action (why here, why now)

The purpose of this project is to improve the usability of the Cannon Beach day-use area as a social gathering space with more seating and to provide a better site design for recreational uses.

The Yakutat Ranger District would like to make the proposed improvements at this location because it is the most common gathering place for outdoor events on the Yakutat Ranger District. The existing shelter is rotting and will become unsafe within the next two or three years.

Average daily use of the shelter is over two people a day from April through October – which accounts for about 525 people a year. Currently the most popular activities are visiting the beach, accessing the beach for ATV use, wildlife viewing, and picnicking. In the past, there were tables between the shelter and pavilion that received moderate use. Since these were removed, this social opportunity has been lost. Other problems with the site include a small rusty grill that is exposed to the elements; road access to the cannons which promote damage to the sites (fires, broken glass, and litter); and during high-use times, traffic flow is an issue.

In addition to the average daily use, there are at least two occasions a year when the Yakutat community uses the site - the 4th of July and Fairweather Day (the 1st Saturday in August). During these events about 350 people visit the area. Occasionally there are smaller events such as end-of-the-year school picnics, the Tour de Yakutat Bike Race, Easter Egg Hunts, weddings and other social gatherings.

The proposed enhancements would provide increased visitor satisfaction with this site through the installation of high-quality facilities, increase visitor safety and comfort through a re-designed shelter and re-designed traffic flow, interpretation of the WWII features at the site, and the establishment of appropriate standards with respect to ADA accessibility and engineering specifications. Potential public safety issues, lack of facility accessibility, continued damage to the cannon sites due to road access, and continued degradation of existing facilities are anticipated to continue should the proposed action not be implemented.

Proposed Action (what)

The proposed actions would include:

1. Replacing the recreation site's deteriorating shelter and incorporating a grill under a hooded fume vent to provide a covered cooking area;
2. Adding fixed outdoor tables and seating in an open area between the shelter and pavilion;
3. Restricting access to the cannon sites to foot traffic by placing barricades at the road access points for vehicles;
4. Restoring two deteriorating WWII era cannons which would include reattaching their barrels and removing rust;
5. Placing an interpretive sign at each of the cannon sites, near the buffalo amphibious vehicle and along the inner beach road;
6. Improving signage with a kiosk and traffic signs, including those for handicap parking; and
7. Constructing a gravel vehicle turn-around from the inner beach road (FDR 9968) to the road along the beach fringe.

A site survey will be completed by Forest Service landscape architects, which may change the location or orientation of the facilities or trail. In addition, a design narrative will be written, which is intended to guide the planning process and identify anticipated management or resource issues. These concerns can include, but are not limited to:

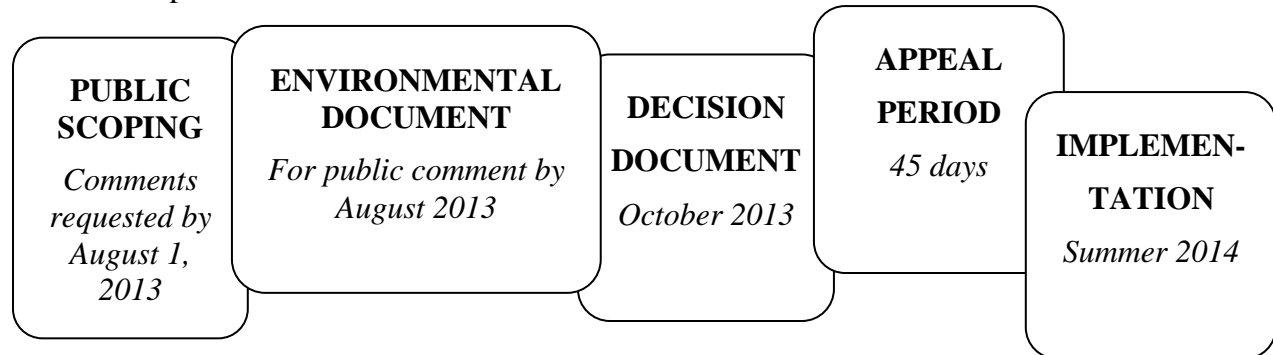
- Maintaining the character of the setting
- Providing accessibility standards that meet a variety of physical abilities and ages
- Maintaining sensitivity to cultural artifacts and archaeological resources
- Protecting sensitive plant species, if found
- Providing better traffic flow

Public Participation

The Tongass National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) first listed the Cannon Beach Day-Use Area improvement project in June 2013. The quarterly listing and subsequent quarters are available on the internet at http://data.ecosystem-management.org/nepaweb/nepa_project_exp.php?project=37830

An interdisciplinary team will review and potentially modify the proposed action based on your comments. If you have concerns, believe there are alternative methods to satisfy the purpose and need, or desire to express support, please direct your comments to Lee A. Benson, District Ranger, Yakutat Ranger District, PO Box 327, Yakutat, AK 99689 or by e-mail to comments-alaska-tongass-yakutat@fs.fed.us with "Cannon Beach" in the subject line. You can also call

(907) 784-3359 or fax your comments to (907) 784-3457. It would be most helpful to have comments 30 days following publication of the scoping notice in the Juneau Mountain Empire; however, comments will be accepted at any time. Comments are most helpful when they refer to a cause and effect on specific areas or resources within the project area. Please refer to the enclosed maps.



We look forward to your participation. Your input and ideas will help ensure a successful assessment. Thank you for taking time to help manage your National Forest!

Sincerely,

LEE A. BENSON

District Ranger



